



## FOCUS ON HISTORY

**Kaliningrad** The Russian exclave of Kaliningrad is slightly larger than the state of Connecticut. The rest of Russia lies more than 200 miles (322 km) away, across Lithuania and Belarus. Lithuania borders the city on the north and east. Poland lies to the south.

Founded by German knights in the 1200s, the city and surrounding area were once part of Germany. The Germans called the city Königsberg (KOOH-niks-berk), or "King's City." Königsberg eventually became the seat of the Prussian government. During World War II, it became a staging area for German attacks against the Soviet Union. When the Soviets defeated Germany, they took control of the area.

The Soviets wanted to remove as much of Königsberg's German culture as possible. They renamed the area Kaliningrad after a Soviet leader. They also destroyed historical sites. Finally, the Soviets forced the German residents to leave. Some went to Germany, while the Soviets sent others to prison camps. Ethnic Russians and other Slavs then moved into the abandoned homes. Kaliningrad became a key base for the Soviet navy. The city is still Russia's only Baltic port that is free of ice all year.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kaliningrad began to build a market economy. A skilled workforce and the port's access to richer European markets may contribute to that goal. In addition, both Russian and foreign companies doing business in Kaliningrad receive special tax breaks that increase profits. Still, some Russian leaders value the city's status as a military base and want to isolate it from foreign influences. Their efforts might slow Kaliningrad's economic growth. In short, the city's future may be determined as much by outsiders as by the people who live there.

**READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* How did Kaliningrad become a Russian city?



**INTERPRETING THE MAP** Kaliningrad is Russia's only port on the Baltic Sea that can be used all year. Why would Kaliningrad be of strategic military importance to Russia?

## Poland

Nearly all of Poland's people are ethnic Polish and speak Polish, a Slavic language. In addition, the population is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic.

Warsaw is Poland's capital and its transportation hub. The city lies along the Vistula River. Evidence of early settlement on the city's site dates back more than 1,000 years. Warsaw became the capital of the kingdom of Poland in the late 1500s. In the early 1900s Warsaw had the largest urban Jewish population in the world. When the Germans took over Warsaw during their invasion of Poland, they forced the Jews to live in a **ghetto**. A ghetto is a section of a city where a minority group is forced to live. The Jews defied the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. More than 60,000 Jews died as a result. World War II devastated

*The Solidarity Party, a labor union that became a political party, led Poland's struggle to break away from communism. Poland was the first country to leave the Soviet bloc. Here an old Soviet monument bears red paint thrown by anticommunist protesters.*





# Section 3

## Poland and the Baltics

### READ TO DISCOVER

1. What is the history of Poland and the Baltic countries?
2. What are the urban environments and economy of Poland like today?
3. What influences have shaped culture in the Baltic countries?

### WHY IT MATTERS

In 1999 Poland became one of three former Soviet-bloc states to join NATO. Use [CNNfyi.com](http://CNNfyi.com) or other **current events** sources to learn more about NATO's relationship with former communist countries in Europe.

### DEFINE

exclave  
ghetto

### LOCATE

Kaliningrad  
Warsaw  
Vistula River  
Kraków  
Gdańsk



*In 1386 the monarchs of Poland and Lithuania united their countries. This union, the Commonwealth of Two Nations, became a powerful force in European affairs. After about 1550, however, costly wars and poor leadership weakened the Commonwealth. Russia took it over in the mid-1700s. This Polish helmet dates from about 1640.*

## History

Poland gets its name from a Slavic people who moved into the area long ago. Their name, *Polanie*, came from a Slavic word meaning “plain” or “field.” In fact, Poland’s landscape is filled with plains and rolling hills.

Poland is the largest of the European countries that once made up what was called the Soviet bloc. These countries were allied with the Soviet Union from shortly after World War II until the early 1990s. Poland had also been under Russian control during part of the 1700s and 1800s. During that period, Austria and Prussia (and later Germany) also occupied areas that make up Poland today. Poland became independent after World War I. During and after World War II, however, the Soviet Union occupied the country. A Communist government then ruled the country for more than 40 years.

The Baltic countries also gained independence from Russia after World War I. These countries are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. They stretch northward from Poland to the Gulf of Finland. The Soviet Union took over these countries during World War II. However, they regained their independence in 1991.

While most people have embraced the move toward democracy and capitalism, some people in the Baltics and Poland favor a return to Communist rule. Russian cultural influences linger in the Baltic countries. In fact, some of the countries have large Russian minority populations. Also, Russia still controls Kaliningrad (kuh-LEE-nin-grat). The city, along with its surrounding territory, is an **exclave**. An exclave is an area separated from the rest of a country by the territory of other countries.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* What role have foreign countries played in the history of Poland and the Baltic countries?

Poles play a game of street chess. The people of Poland are proud of their country's diverse cultural heritage. Poland has strong traditions of art, literature, and music. Since the 1950s, film has also become a prominent means of expression in Poland. Polish movie directors have achieved worldwide fame for their work.



the city. After the war, the Poles rebuilt Warsaw. Today more than 2.2 million people live there.

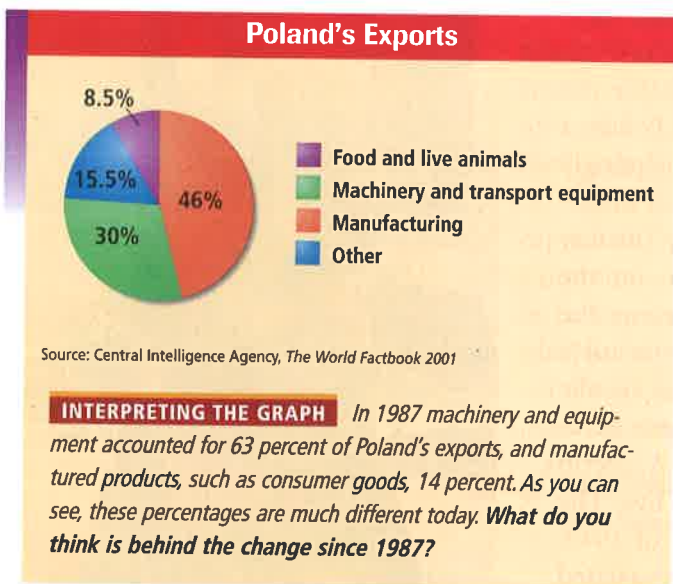
Farther south along the Vistula lies Kraków (KRAH-kow). The beautiful medieval city has a university, monuments, and museums. Poland's main seaport is Gdańsk (guh-DAHNSK), on the Baltic coast. Gdańsk has been a ship-building city since the 1500s.

Poland's economy has made progress since the end of the Communist era. Many successful Polish companies have emerged. In addition, Poland has attracted foreign investment. Auto and glass manufacturing has grown. Still,

the traditional coal and steel industries are lagging. Poland's economic future took an upturn in 1997 when the country adopted a new constitution. The constitution committed the country to a free-market economy and to turning over many government-controlled companies to private ownership. More economic progress is needed before the country can join the EU.

Much of Poland's farming activity takes place in productive soils created by thick deposits of loess. Cereals, potatoes, and sugar beets are the main crops. Still, farmers have suffered as the country has moved from communism to capitalism. Many do not have work. Others have moved to the cities to look for jobs.

**✓ READING CHECK:** **Human Systems** How has the operation of Poland's economy changed since the end of the Communist era?





## The Baltic Countries

During the Middle Ages, two groups of people lived in what are now the Baltic countries. The Balts occupied modern Latvia and Lithuania. Finns from Scandinavia made up the other group. They settled in Estonia. Lithuania remained an independent country for many years, but Latvia and Estonia did not. First Vikings and then German knights called the Teutonic Order invaded and conquered these countries. The Teutonic Knights brought a strong German element into Baltic society. They also helped spread Christianity to the Latvians and the Estonians. Lithuania did not become Christian until later.

Historically, the Baltic Sea was one of the busiest trade routes in northern Europe. People who met in Baltic ports exchanged both goods and information. The influence of this meeting of cultures can still be seen in the Baltic countries. For example, the Estonian language is related to Finnish. Also, like the Finns, almost all Estonians are Lutheran. Latvia has ties to Sweden, a result of a long history of trade between the two countries. Lithuania, on the other hand, is closer culturally to Poland and the Roman Catholic Church. Most Lithuanian folk festivals are tied to church holidays. Folk music is an important part of these festivals. Many of the instruments used are similar to Polish musical instruments. One example is the *cymbaly*, a type of percussion instrument. Also, Russian minorities in each of the Baltic countries keep Russian cultural traditions alive.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania share some challenges. They are trying to rebuild their economies after years of Soviet rule. Their citizens are also cleaning up environmental pollution from the Soviet era. Small populations and limited natural resources make trade essential to all three countries.

✓ **READING CHECK:** *Human Systems* Why is trade essential to the Baltic countries?



### INTERPRETING THE VISUAL RECORD

*Riga, the capital and largest city of Latvia, is a port city on the Baltic Sea. The city's architecture and society reflect the influence of many different cultures. Germany, Poland, Russia, and Sweden have all helped to shape Latvian society. How has the city's location influenced Riga's cultural development?*



## Review

**Define** exclave, ghetto

### Working with Sketch Maps

On the map that you created in Section 2, label Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Warsaw, the Vistula River, Kraków, and Gdańsk. In which city did Jews living in the ghetto rise up against the Germans?

### Reading for the Main Idea

- Human Systems** What countries once controlled areas that are now part of Poland?
- Human Systems** How are Poland's three main cities related to the country's politics, sea trade, and history?
- Environment and Society** What are two challenges facing the Baltic countries?



### Critical Thinking

- Making Generalizations** Why might many people in Poland and the Baltic countries want closer ties to Western Europe than to Russia?

### Organizing What You Know

- Draw a map illustrating cultural and historical ties between the countries discussed in this section and other European countries. Note some specific cultural connections, such as language and religion.